

COMPLEX CHRONIC DISEASES PROGRAM

Medication Handout

Reviewed: May 9, 2022

Medication: Venlafaxine XR (Effexor XR) 37.5 mg

What is Venlafaxine?

Venlafaxine is a medication called a “Serotonin Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitor” or “SNRI”, initially developed to treat depression. It works by altering the levels of certain transmitters in the brain such as noradrenalin and serotonin.

It can also be used in the treatment of anxiety, perimenopausal migraines, migraine prevention, irritable bowel syndrome (with constipation), pain, and certain symptoms of ME/CFS (but not the fatigue itself).

Expected Benefit:

- Usually takes 4 – 6 weeks after reaching a dose of 112.5 mg to notice a benefit

What to expect:

- “Transition” effects
 - These symptoms are the effects of your body getting used to the medication (i.e., transition onto the medication)
 - Symptoms differ for everybody. Some people feel “not like themselves,” a bit anxious, or unusual.
 - These symptoms typically go away after 7 to 10 days
 - Please see your doctor if the anxiety is intolerable.

Watch for possible side effects:

It is important to be aware of the side effects however, it is also important to remember that not all side effects occur in everyone. Many of the less serious side effects will improve over the first few days of taking the medication.

If you have problems with these side effects talk with your doctor or pharmacist:

- Trouble sleeping that is more than usual
- Heart burn, stomach upset
- Sexual dysfunction
- High blood pressure (Make sure your family doctor is regularly checking your blood pressure)

Stopping the medication:

This medication should not abruptly discontinued. Your doctor may advise you to reduce the dose slowly to help prevent withdrawal.

How to use this medication:

- Take this medication with or without food

Dosing Schedule:

- Start with 37.5 mg daily
- Increase dose according to table below

- You can stay at the same dose (stop increasing) if you experience side effects

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37.5 mg daily	For 2 weeks
75 mg daily	For 2 weeks
112.5 mg daily	For 1 month; Maintain this dose
Follow up with clinic before increasing the dose	

Drugs and Foods to Avoid:

Ask your doctor or pharmacist before using any other medication, including non-prescription medication (over-the-counter medication) and herbal products.

- Avoid dextromethorphan ("DM" cough products)
- Avoid alcohol use
- Avoid herbal products such as chamomile, primrose oil, fenugreek, flaxseed, 5 HTP, feverfew, fish oils, omega 3, flaxseed, ginkgo, ginseng, red clover, SAME, willow bark, glucosamine, green tea, horse chestnut seed, St John's Wort

Please contact the Complex Chronic Diseases Program if you have further questions about your medications.